

Chairwoman Jo Ann Davis
Subcommittee on Civil Service and Agency Organization
“Human Capital Succession Planning:
How the Federal Government Can Get a Workforce to Achieve Results”
Opening Statement
October 1, 2003

Thank you all for joining us here today. In Congress, we are constantly confronted with very immediate problems, the here-and-now, and we don't always have the time to step back and take a look at the bigger picture. That is what we are going to do today, to take a longer-term look at the federal workforce, and some of the challenges confronting it.

Leadership succession in the public sector is a continuing concern among human resources managers at all levels of government, and in democracies across the globe. Today, we receive a General Accounting Office study detailing efforts in four nations – the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand – to address this issue, and some of the successful methods managers there have developed. The GAO recommendations include: making sure top-level leadership is actively engaged in succession planning, linking succession planning to your strategic plan, identifying and grooming talented individuals early in their careers, and concentrating on development and training.

That seems like a good recipe to me, and I will particularly note the emphasis on staff development. One of the tools we as a government have been sorely lacking is staff development and training, and that must change if we are to meet the challenges of the coming years.

We've heard for years now that the federal government faces a potential crisis in its top leadership – for example, that as many as half of the Senior Executive Service could retire by 2005. Whether those worst-case scenarios come true or not remains to be seen, but regardless, we must do a better job of preparing the next generation of leaders.

I again thank our distinguished guests for being here, and I look forward to hearing your remarks.

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